National Tribune

"TO CARE FOR HIM WHO HAS BORNE THE BATTLE, AND FOR HIS WIDOW AND ORPHANS."

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The Boy Duke:

A Tale of the 10th Century.

PRAISE OF GARETH.

"Risking His Life for a Low-born Underling."

AN UNVARNISHED TALE.

"Freedom to Prisoners and Pardon to Offenders."

BY FRANCES WILSON ("FANNIE WILLIAMS"), Author of "Harry Redfearn, the Young Machinist"; "Anthony Blake, a Boy of the Period"; "Dick Leslie's Life in Texas," "The Boys of Brythewaite School," "Rob and Bob," "Prince Olaf," "The Land Beyond the Golden Cave," "Lizabel, the Child of the Storm," etc.

CHAPTER XVII.

"WITHOUT REPROACH OR FEAR."

"FOR you?" repeated the Boy Duke. "Has Gareth put his life to hazard for your sake, Hilary?"

The lad replied, looking at Gareth for a moment, as if to ask his leave:

"It was in this wise, noble Lord, since you bid me tell the tale —— But my Lord Gareth said I must not be always talking about it."

"Ay, so I did, Hilary; but the Duke of Normandy will not be always asking you," said Gareth, half laughing and half tenderly; and so Richard he added: "My Lord, the poor child wearied all men's ears with his never-ceasing plaudits on a trifling, boyish exploit of mine, until I bade him drop the song, lest we should all be sick of such a tiresome tune."

"Let him sing it once more," said Richard, gayly, "since I have never heard it. Go on, Hilary."

"Yes, noble Lord. 'T was long ago, when I was very small—but oh, I well remember!—and my Lord Gareth, I wot he was not much older than your noble self, and nothing like so stout and tall. Yet I remember all as if it had been yesterday; and indeed I never can forget. Oh, I was so frightened when the smoke rolled up all thick and smothered me, and I saw the flames come leaping at me, and I was all alone, and so little! Nay, but I cry you mercy, my Lord—I have not yet told you how it happened."

"Tell your story in your own way," said Richard, encouragingly.

THE SCULLION.

"Well, then, 't was thus: We had a fire in the castle-court, my Lord, and all the stables and the sculleries were burned. They are built up again, and better than ever now; but the poor horses were all burnt out of their stalls that night, and some of them died, too, of the smoke, my father said. 'T was a spark from the smith's forge that started the fire, he said. And I was sleeping in the loft over the stalls, where my father left me when he went to blow the bellows for the smith—for they were doing some work in the forge that night, and kept the fires up late. And all at once my father smelled a smoke, and he looked out and so did the smith, and there they saw the stables all ablaze! My father cried out that I was in the loft, and they ran and tried to save me, but the fire was too fierce and they could not get to me. And all the time I was screaming for help, and trying to get out; but a great beam fell on my leg and almost killed me with the pain, and then I could not move at all; and my head was dizzy, and I thought I must perish in the fire.

"So I began praying to my blessed patron saint, as my mother said I must, if I were ever in fear or trouble; and then I heard a voice that called my name, and soon I saw a figure crawling on the floor and coming toward me, through the blinding smoke—

AND I THOUGHT IT WAS THE HOLY ST. HILAIRE!

But a saint would not have crawled; he would have walked right through the flames, and not so much as the smell of fire could have touched the hem of his garment, so my Lord Gareth says. And it was not a saint—it was my dear young Lord! Ay, it was he who came to save me, where no one else dare come; and, truly, since that hour he hath seemed ever like a saint to me!"

The boy looked at Gareth, whose countenance began to assume the same expression of annoyance with which he had listened to Count Rogier's recital; and, as if he understood the reason, Hilary said, abashed:

"I must not call my Lord a saint, for it likes him not that anyone should speak of him in such wise; but I pray you, gracious Lord of Normandy, may I not say it was a deed well worthy of any Knight to risk his life—and he the noble heir of Brittany!—to rescue such a little low-born underling?"

"Yes, Hilary; and your Lord need not be vexed to hear the praise of such a deed!" said Richard, warmly. "But tell us how he brought you safely out of such a peril."

Hilary answered:

"He lifted the great beam that was crushing my leg, and it made him stagger, too, it was so heavy; but when I went to rise, my Lord, it gave me such pain that I screamed out and fell down again; and then I did not know what happened. He took me in his arms and bore me through the flames, I know not how—and neither does my Lord Gareth himself know how 'twas done, save by the aid of St. Hilaire—but he tore away the burning thatch, and took me out through the roof, and leaped down with me upon a pile of hay, for so my father told me afterward; but I knew nothing of what passed until I found myself lying on a pallet in the porch, and the Friar Aldebrand was doing something to my leg that hurt me dreadfully, and made me scream again. But I ceased my cries and tried to bear it, when I beheld my Lord Gareth kneeling at my side, with his fair face all blackened, and his dear hands all torn and bleeding, and making naught of that, but he was weeping for my pain. Ay, noble Lord, I saw the tears upon his cheek!"

"AND WOULD'ST THOU COMMEND A KNIGHT FOR HIS EXCELLENT WEEPING, HILARY? Truly, you are giving me such a character, amongst you, as will lose my golden spurs for me, I fear!" said Gareth, ruefully.

Then, seeing the frightened look in Hilary's eyes, he quickly added:

"Nay, nay, I meant it not, my little lad.

GARETH RESCUES HILARY.

Thou hast done thy best for me, and spoken nothing save the truth."

Richard further reassured the boy by saying:

"Fear not, Hilary, you have done your master's cause no injury; the tears he shed for you will never shame his Knighthood."

And turning to Osmond of Centoville, he directed the Squire to give Hilary a broad gold piece, by way of recompense for such a tale, so much to Gareth's honor.

Having then dismissed the scullion-boy—who was made entirely happy by his words—he said to Gareth, in a serious tone:

"This was a deed that will doubtless be recorded to your credit, Gareth, when you shall stand in that final court of judgment, where the golden spurs will be of little value; and yet—'tis not enough. Your very foes might love you, if they could hear what I have heard; but that is not enough. The foes of a Knight must fear him."

He cast a smiling glance around the crowd of nobles on the dais, and said:

"Who now will tell me a tale of Gareth's knightly valor—a gallant feat of arms?"

No one replied, but all began to look at Gareth wonderingly, and each to look at his neighbor, with disconcerted faces. At last the Seneschal of Nantes, a lordly-looking man of middle age, advanced a step and said:

"My Lord of Normandy, 'tis strange enough, and strange we never thought of it before; but none among us here can say that he hath ever seen our young Lord in a fray, save in the sport of mimic warfare, when the young men try their skill; but there, indeed, he ever bears the palm."

But Richard shook his head.

"No mimic war can test the valor that will bear the brunt of deadly battle; and warfare, when all is said, is the business of a Knight. What! even thou, Count Rogier, art thou silent?"

"My Lord of Normandy," said Rogier, disconsolately, "if I had ever chanced to be with Gareth in a fight, I well know that I could tell you a tale of more than common valor. But I have never seen him in battle yet."

Richard looked at Gareth, who blushed and dropped his eyes; and then he looked at Alan. The Breton Duke remarked, composedly:

"IT SEEMS, MY LORD, YOU NEEDS MUST TAKE HIS FATHER'S TESTIMONY, AFTER ALL."

"Ah!" cried Richard, delighted. "Thou, Alan, hast then the tale of arms that I would hear!"

"Ay, my Lord; and as to my being over careful of my speech, lest I should praise my son too much, there is no fear of that," said Alan, "for I shall praise him not at all. You will not get so many words of me as you had of my Lord Count and that prating boy." Alan, however, cast a glance of greater kindness at the scullion-boy than he was often seen to bestow upon a servitor, as he continued: "I shall tell thee a plain, unvarnished tale, my Lord, and the adventure 'twill relate was no mimic warfare, I can well assure thee—it was war in earnest! And 'tis known to none save Gareth and myself, for he and I were sole comrades in the fray. I shall not call my son a holy saint, nor yet a martyr; and if thou dost not say it was a feat of arms which he performed that day, as valiant as ever won a Knight his golden spurs——"

Alan checked himself abruptly, as he became aware that he was departing already from his determination to praise the candidate for Knighthood "not at all." After a moment, he began again, with an embarrassed laugh:

"Well, well, my Lord, we are all mortal! You will not marvel much that I forgot myself when you have heard my story—and now, in good sooth, you shall have it in a few words. It happened, near upon a year ago, that Gareth and myself were parted from the hunt, and found ourselves alone and out of our reckoning, in the Haunted Forest of Rohan——"

"Do you hunt in a haunted forest, Duke?" interrupted Richard, half smiling, yet speaking in a tone which had its touch of the prevailing belief in the supernatural, so characteristic of those times, from which he was by no means wholly free. "What ghost or goblin haunts the forest of Rohan, may I ask?"

"GOBLINS, MY LORD, AND DEMONS damned, and trolls and elves beyond all numbers, as they say; but I fear none of that ghostly crew," said Alan, carelessly. "St. Malo is my guard against their wiles."

It appeared that the Breton Duke, though he might possess but little real religion—as intimated by his blunt vassal, Rogier of Rennes—had all the usual stanch reliance on the friendship and protection of the saint by whom he swore, and to whom he paid his practical devotions. He continued:

"Of a certainty, however, there is a kind of most substantial bogie, by which our forests here in Brittany are more infested than I would they were; the kind that stands across a lonely rider's path, and clamors for his purse; and if he have no purse, will take himself, belike, and hold him for a ransom! 'Tis the kind of a pest that Rollo and your father rooted out of Normandy, stock and branch, my Lord; and if I were a Rollo or a Longsword, myself might do the same. Being only the conquered vassal of a Longsword, I am not so skilled in the keeping of law and order, and must make myself content to fight the robbers when I see them, and chastise them as I may. And truly, Richard, on that occasion of which I speak I had good cause to doubt my chance of ever lifting sword again to smite misdoers in mine own land or to aid thee to withstand thine enemies!"

"Were you, then, attacked by robbers, Duke?" asked Richard, greatly interested.

Alan made answer:

"Yes, my Lord, they were no less than a round dozen of stout bandits, and well armed, that came upon us two; but we were not the men, my son and I, to yield our purses or our persons for the asking. We were dismounted, having made a pause to give our horses water, when these outlaws burst forth from the coppice and took us unprepared; but we stood against them stoutly, and made so good a fight that we had seven of the 12 stretched on the ground before they brought me down with a wound that laid me helpless—and five more assailants remaining.

"And then, my Lord, Gareth stood over me and fought the five alone. They covered him with wounds, and at last they brought him to his knee, but even then he would not yield; he beat them off, and struggled to his feet again, and faced them still with such a look of desperate courage in his face as made me think he knew his life was ebbing, and only meant to have revenge, for himself and for his sire, before he died. But he told me, when 'twas over, that he had felt assured of victory, and that he doubted not the saints upheld him—as perchance they did, and better business, I wot, than singing psalms and such employment as the Friars tell us the saints do most engage in! Let that be as it may," said Alan, proudly gazing as his heir,

"MY SON SLEW THREE OF HIS FIVE ASSAILANTS OUTRIGHT,

and the two survivors dared not withstand him longer, all bleeding and wearied as he was, but turned their backs to him and fled, crying out that he was more than mortal! Nay then, I call him none too saintly for a Breton and a Knight; but I do believe the varlets took him for St. Michael! And that's the son, my Lord, whose valor I must not extol too highly, because he is mine own—ay, and hath as much of his fighting father in him as of his pious mother, by the bones of blessed Malo!"

Richard, springing to his feet, clapped his hands with irrepressible applause, in which he was clamorously joined by the entire assemblage of Breton and Norman nobles who had listened to Alan's story; and the Boy Duke's voice could barely be heard above the din, exclaiming:

GARETH'S FIGHT WITH THE ROBBERS.

"You are right! That deed shall win your son his Knighthood, Alan; and to-morrow shall he take his accolade!"

The last word was lost in a storm of cheers which arose among the nobles on the dais, and was quickly taken up by their retainers, and echoed by the sturdy lungs of every artisan or laborer of Nantes who by good luck had been permitted to make his way into the castle-hall that night and partake of Alan's banquet in honor of his Lord. And not alone because they had been feasted were these humblest of his vassals cheering so vigorously to hear that the heir of Brittany was about to be made a Knight; for Richard plainly saw, by the honest joy in every countenance, how deeply Gareth was beloved by all the Bretons, and, especially, how his very name was almost worshiped by the common people.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE BED-CHAMBER OF A DUKE.

When the tumult of applause which followed Richard's announcement had subsided, he turned to Alan, saying:

"I marvel, Duke, that you and your son should have both kept silent so long, concerning an exploit of such uncommon bravery."

To which the Duke of Brittany, with his grim smile, made answer:

"As to that, my Lord, you see that Gareth is not like to vaunt himself when he can help it; and for mine own part, I knew the fitting time would come, to speak of this. We were in sorry plight when the fight was ended, for going on our way to join the hunt; but when we had breathed us awhile, and bound each other's wounds as best we could, my son made shift, with what strength he had, to put me on my steed, and got himself to horse, and we let the good beasts find their own way through the forest. They brought us to a path we knew, and then we found our people; and we said only that we had fallen in with robbers and barely come off with our lives; but it was only by the valor of my son that we lived to say so much, as you have heard, my Lord. Ay, Gareth, if thy sire is none too soft with thee, and prates but little of thy holiness, he knows thee for the man thou art!"

Gareth stood blushing like a modest boy, to hear himself commended in this manner by the grim sire, who, it was evident enough, was by no means in the habit of extolling him too fondly or too frequently. Richard exclaimed:

"He is in truth a man, such as the Duke of Brittany may well be proud to call his son—but, Alan, be not thou so much mistaken as to think his virtuous life will count for nothing to his honor among Knights! Indeed, I know a Knight whose name is on the lips of every child in Rouen, far-famed in every land for the prowess of his deeds, and not the less renowned for holiness."

Seeing that Gareth looked at him inquiringly, he added, in a tone of reverence:

"I mean that flower of chivalry and pattern of piety, the brother of Otho the Great, and the son of King Henry the Fowler—

"SIR BRUNO, THE DUKE OF LORRAINE."

At the mention of this renowned Knight—afterward Archbishop of Cologne, and a great light of the Church in his day—Gareth appeared profoundly impressed; and even Alan, though he assumed an air of indifference to the honors of chivalry, was well enough acquainted with the name and fame of Bruno of Lorraine, to recognize the compliment conferred upon his son by Richard's next remark:

"I heard Sir Bruno, in my father's hall, describe the feat by which he gained his golden spurs; and on my Norman faith, it was not so great an achievement, Gareth, as your own."

"Oh, my Lord!" murmured Gareth, overwhelmed by such a statement.

"'Tis true," insisted Richard, "as he himself would say; for never was a gallant Knight so willing and so fair to render all due honor to the valor of a youthful neophyte. Nor ever one so faithful and devout in the holy ordering of his daily life; therefore, take him for your model, Gareth, when you are dubbed a Knight—and that shall be to-morrow."

"Then, my Lord," said the Duke of Brittany—who was secretly somewhat dissatisfied with the evident intention, on the part of Richard and his son, to give a religious tone to the occasion—"Then, my Lord, we must have the word sent forth at once, that all my people may rejoice and make a holiday, as well I know they will; and nothing shall they lack that I can give, to speed the merry-making. There shall be no toiling in Brittany to-morrow, nor any pain or punishment meted out to any man, howsoever he hath offended; the poorest laborer shall feast and take his ease, and every prisoner in the land shall have his liberty. And we must have such banqueting and joyance in the hall, for a week to come, as will do full honor to the presence of my Lord and the knighting of my son; nor shall any vassal of mine have cause for sorrow or complaining, whilst we keep this week of revelry, if Alan's hand can satisfy his need. To-morrow will all my Lords be gathered here, and the preparations for their entertainment must be set on foot to-night."

Alan, as he spoke, had turned and beckoned to his Seneschal, and other officials of the castle, who came forward respectfully and stood to receive his orders. Richard suppressed his amazement at the celerity with which the Breton Duke proposed to have a succession of banquets inaugurated, to follow on the heels of this night's carousal; and Alan calmly continued, addressing his officials:

"See to it that all these commands are duly carried out; and Regnier"—this to the Seneschal—"send out the messengers at once to bear my proclamation of freedom to all prisoners, and pardon to all offenders."

Then, turning to his son:

"Gareth," he said, "hast thou not some flummery or other to go through, before thy vows are taken?"

"I MUST WATCH MINE ARMS TO-NIGHT WITH PRAYER,"

said Gareth, reverently. "And the Friar Aldebrand must shrive me of my sins."

"Get you gone to your prayers and your watching, then," rejoined his father, "for the hour grows late and my Lord Richard looks weary, as well he may. Indeed, my young Lord, after such a journey as you have made since morning, I should have earlier remembered your need of rest."

Richard courteously replied that he was too well entertained to feel any weariness, but signified that he was ready to retire for the night, if Alan had no further affairs for his consideration. He also informed the Breton Duke that his part in the impending ceremonies and festivities must be concluded on the morrow, as there were matters of importance awaiting his arrival at Rouen, and he could not therefore tarry longer than one day at Nantes.

"Well, my Lord; I had hoped to keep you with us for some days, but if it may not be," said Alan, "I must endeavor to prove my allegiance the more, by doing you the more honor and pleasure while you stay."

He summoned several boy pages, from the numerous group in waiting, and directed them to bring lights, in order that he might conduct his Lord in person to the chamber of state, which was reserved for guests of high distinction. At the same moment, his eye fell on Eric of Arras, and with a frown he called to the churlish jailer, who still stood near at hand, and bade him take the youthful hostage back to his dungeon-cell.

Richard was about to interpose with a vehement protest, when, somewhat to his surprise, Gareth stepped forward and laid his hand on Eric's shoulder, saying, boldly:

"Nay, my sire, why send him back to prison for so brief a time? 'Twill be scarce an hour before the morrow will begin—and with the first stroke of the bell that ushers in the day, shall I demand the keeping of your word, if Eric be in prison!"

"What—what!" stammered Alan; stopping short, however, and looking half amused as he saw the meaning of Gareth's interference. The young man perceived his advantage, and quickly added:

"Oh yes, my sire, it was your promise that every prisoner in Brittany should be set free, in honor of my Knighthood; and the day is almost here! I pray you do not refuse me for the matter of an hour."

"Shrewd enough!" laughed Alan. "Be it so; the liberty of a hostage I grant him for your sake. But," he added, grimly, "I make no promise for a future day."

Gareth was satisfied, apparently, with the present concession, which was all that he had claimed, and content to let the future take care of itself. He thanked his father warmly, and turned to Eric, saying:

"My chamber is yours, Eric, as it hath been ever since you came to Nantes, till we were parted by your imprisonment. I cannot share it with you to-night, however, for I must to the chapel, and there watch mine arms until I hear the matin bell."

"Nay, Gareth, my brother, I do not wish to sleep when you are numbering the watches of the night with prayers beside your consecrated sword!" exclaimed the Flemish youth.

"LET ME KEEP THE VIGIL WITH YOU, I ENTREAT."

"I know not if that may be," said Gareth doubtfully, appealing to Richard. "Must not a candidate for Knighthood watch his arms alone, my Lord?"

"He may have his Esquire at hand," said Richard; "for so I heard this point decided at Bayeux, between my father and some other Knights—Sir Ivo here, for one."

He turned to Sir Ivo de Belesme, and the spurred and belted Dane, with a deferential bow, corroborated his opinion on a subject which had been esteemed of sufficient importance to be discussed in a Council of Knights.

Then the young Fleming said:

"I will be with you as your Squire, dear Gareth, and gladly will I serve you in that office, if you will take me, for such time——"

He paused, and glancing at the Duke of Brittany, smiled sadly and said no more. It was apparent that he, at least, indulged no very cheering hope for a "future day"; but as Gareth, assenting to his wish, took him by the hand and turned to leave the hall, and both respectfully saluted Richard, the Boy Duke leaned toward them and said, in a low voice, only audible to them:

"I thank you, Gareth; you have given me a hint of which I will avail myself in due time! Fear not for Count Eric; I see the way to save him now, and a way that offers no occasion for ill-feeling to the Duke, your father."

Richard's blue eyes were dancing with boyish mirth and mischief; but a graver satisfaction was expressed in his earnest accent. Neither Gareth nor the Flemish youth comprehended his meaning; but they both looked at him gratefully as they bowed low and passed out with brightened faces, leaving the hall by a cloistered passage-way, which led to the chapel of St. Malo in the court.

The Duke of Brittany, with Rogier of Rennes and another of his chief nobles, then escorted Richard in great form to the state guest-chamber of the castle, which had been duly prepared for his reception.

They were preceded by the pages—younger sons of the Breton Lords—lighting the way with flambeaux, which flickered and flared and smoked along the windy corridors and cold stone stairways of Alan's ducal palace, where many a bat and owl was quite as much at home as he.

The guest-room was a square apartment, of moderate size, at the top of a massive tower, the walls of which were so immensely thick that the one narrow window of the room served more for the purpose of ventilation than for observation of the outside world. The fresh wind from the river Loire was blowing in through its open casement, and a great, round moon was visible in a strip of frosty autumn sky; but nothing more could the young guest have seen, had he sought to look out of the window.

Security, at that time, was the most essential point to be considered in the building of a habitation for "high-born" humanity; and to attain this point, both elegance and comfort were sacrificed. A man's house was truly his castle; and unless he built it of sufficient strength to stand a siege of war, it was likely enough to be his tomb.

However, the sleeping-apartment in which Alan had instated his distinguished guest, was lacking in no convenience or decoration which could be thought of, in Richard's day, as being needful to the comfort or dignity of a Duke of Normandy. The walls were hung with tapestry, showing pictures of battle and the chase, or scenes of chivalry and wild romance and fable, described by the wandering harpers in their songs and stories; all wrought in the most

(Continued on 8th page.)

THE Lost Army.

Scouting and Fighting Adventures of Two Boys IN MISSOURI AND ARKANSAS IN 1861, '62.

Battle Near the Town of Des Arc.

FOOLING THE SPIES.

BY THOMAS W. KNOX, Author of "The Boy Travelers," "The Young Nimrods," "The Voyage of the Vivian," "Fulton and Steam Navigation," "Decisive Battles Since Waterloo," "Marco Polo for Boys and Girls," etc., etc.

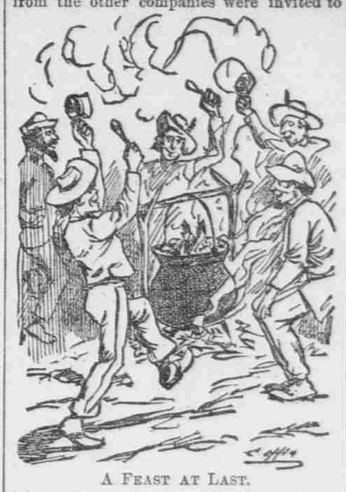
CHAPTER XLVIII.

A REBEL FEAST—FREEING THE NEGROES—BATTLE NEAR DES ARC.

WHEN he went on to tell how his company left the road and wandered for days through a country where there were few inhabitants, and it was very difficult to obtain food. Two or three days together they had nothing but dry corn to eat, and not very much of that, and there was not a pinch of salt to be had at any price. Price's army had been ahead of them, and it was only by getting away from its track that there was hope of discovering anything edible.

"One day four men went out to forage, and managed to find a locality where no army had been. When they came back in the evening they were received with the wildest joy. One man had a piece of bacon, a chicken, a turkey and two geese; another had a young pig and a bag full of turnips, onions and potatoes, and some salt, and the other two had a sugar-kettle, with a capacity of 50 or 60 gallons, which they carried on a pole slung over their shoulders.

"A fire was quickly made under the kettle, and it was partly filled with water. While the water was heating, the pig and fowls were cleaned and cut up, the potatoes and other vegetables prepared, and as the water came to a boil the entire lot was thrown in, along with a double-handful of salt. Men from the other companies were invited to



A FEAST AT LAST.

join in the feast, and while the food was being cooked they formed a circle and danced around the pot, shouting and singing so that they could be heard for miles.

"As long as I live," said the man, "I shall never forget that supper. Nearly every man had a spoon in his pocket, and most of us had tin cups. We spooned out and sipped the broth, and tore the meat into fragments with our fingers, and for once on that retreat we had enough to eat. It was the fourth night after we had left the creek where the stones blew up, and all that time not one of us had eaten enough to make a single hearty meal.

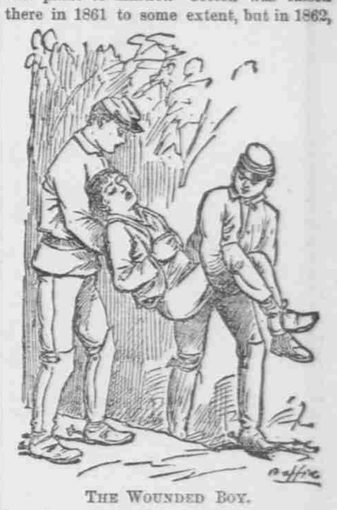
"When we finished our supper we took a bag of cornmeal, which another man had brought in, and emptied it into the cooking-pot; then we kept the whole mess simmering until midnight, after which we let it cool off. By morning it could be cut up into cakes, and each man, after making a breakfast of the stuff, which was something like what they call scrapple in Delaware and Maryland, took a piece of it in his haversack. There was so much grease in our scrapple that it came through and soiled everything, and one of the soldiers said that if we got hard up again we had only to boil our haversacks and clothes and get a good meal out of them."

There was no time to listen to further accounts of the rebel retreat from Pea Ridge, however interesting they might be. Jack and his comrades returned to camp, after shaking hands with their former enemy, and hoping they would not again be called upon to face him in battle.

"I don't think you will," said he, "as I've had all of it I want, and think my game leg will keep me out of the ranks till the war is over. When that will be we won't pretend to argue."

The army remained two days at Augusta, and then took up its line of march for Clarendon, where the transports were said to have arrived under convoy of a gunboat. The country between Jacksonport and Clarendon is one of the finest regions of eastern Arkansas. A short distance from the river the bluffs along the stream fall away into low hills and gentle undulations, which become less distinct until at the divide between the White and St. Francis Rivers the land becomes an almost-unbroken level. A portion of this flat, alluvial country is in many places covered with canebrakes, and is often overflowed in the season of high water. At such times it becomes an almost impassable succession of swamps and quagmires. But at the time our friends traversed it the ground was dry and hard, and offered no obstacle to passage save occasionally at the crossings of creeks and rivulets.

Interspersed among these lowlands is a succession of higher grounds, which are level and rarely broken by anything like an elevation. These lands are excellent for cotton, and down to the opening of the war they had annually sent a good supply of the textile plant to market. Cotton was raised there in 1861 to some extent, but in 1862,



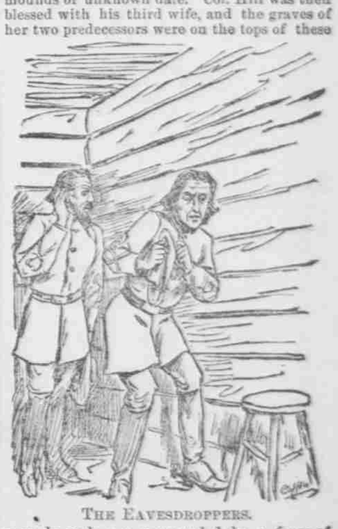
THE WOUNDED BOY.

by orders of the Confederate Government much of the cotton land through the South was planted with corn. The valley of the White River was no exception to the rule, and as our army moved along it passed many fields of corn, of which the ears, just then sufficiently advanced to be edible, formed a welcome addition to the scanty stores possessed by the Commissary Department. As a single article of diet, green corn is not to be recommended, but when combined with other things it is, as everybody knows, a thing not to be despised.

Many of the houses along the line of march were deserted, the inhabitants having fled through fear of the terrible things that would happen to them if they once fell into the hands of the blood-thirsty Yankees. The only Union sentiment in the country was shown by the negroes, who flocked to the army in great numbers, and seemed to feel sure that they would not be harmed. It became noised around among them that wherever they had been employed in building fortifications or cutting timber to oppose the advance of the Union troops they would receive free-papers, especially if their masters were in the rebel service. So many of them professed to have been thus employed that the General grew suspicious, and issued papers only upon the proof being given by several witnesses. The negroes took the stand readily to swear each other into freedom, and many were the liberations in consequence. Paper became scarce, and the backs of letters and even old envelopes came in great demand as material on which freedom certificates could be written.

Every few miles the advance of the army came upon trees felled across the roads, and considerable time was lost in removing these obstructions. From the negroes it was learned that there was a considerable force of rebels at the town of Des Arc, on the east bank of White River, about half way between Augusta and Clarendon. They were said to be about six thousand strong, and to consist mainly of Arkansas and Texas mounted men, under command of General Rust. As they were at a convenient striking distance from the road which Gen. Curtis was following, it was thought quite likely they would make an attack at some point where they could fight to advantage, and the result proved the correctness of this belief.

Several timber obstructions were encountered, most of them at the crossings of small creeks, but nothing was seen of an enemy until the point was reached where the road from Des Arc joins the main one, about 10 miles to the east of that town. Here was the plantation of Col. Hill, an officer of the Confederate army, and his residence and buildings were at the junction of the roads, in the southwest angle. North of the Des Arc road was a cotton-gin and press, and close by were two aboriginal mounds of unknown date. Col. Hill was then blessed with his third wife, and the graves of her two predecessors were on the tops of these



THE EAVESDROPPERS.

mounds, each one surrounded by a fence of white palings. "It must have been," said Harry, afterwards, "a cheerful thing for the third wife to contemplate the graves on these mounds and wonder when her turn would come and where she would be placed." Jack thought the Colonel ought to put up another mound, so as to have everything ready for the good lady's demise.

The country around the junction of the road had been cleared for cotton-fields, but a little way beyond it the forests were dense and af-